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## **Commentary Series**

### **The Teenage Health Project in the London Borough of Newham**

**Helena Svensson De la Cruz**

# **The Teenage Health Project in the London Borough of Newham**

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Centre for Institutional Studies  
University of East London

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## **THE CENTRE FOR INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES**

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The Centre for Institutional Studies (CIS) is a research unit within the University of East London (UEL). Established in 1970, the centre undertakes studies of public policy and public institutions. Its distinctive approach is to identify the problems to which new policy is seen as a solution, and assess the capacity of the institutions to put new policies into practice. The Centre's name, and its approach is derived from the work of Sir Karl Popper and others, and in developing this approach the centre is unique in this country.

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### **THE URBAN REGENERATION TEAM**

The Centre's urban regeneration evaluation team has been involved in the evaluation of a number of regeneration initiatives in East London. These have included Stratford City Challenge programme and SRBs located in East London. Other evaluations include a regional evaluation of the Youth Inclusion Programme for an assessment of the Home Office funded Domestic Violence projects which are part of the Crime Reduction Programme, and a number of projects concerned with reducing the criminal behaviour of young offenders.

The urban regeneration team is multidisciplinary, and consists of researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds, including social sciences, criminology, environmental science, and economics. In this way they are well suited to evaluate Urban Regeneration programmes which typically cover a wide range of projects, objectives, and focuses.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the research without whose co-operation this study would not have been possible. In particular the young people who completed questionnaires. We would also like to thank Irene Smith for her help in preparing the report for publication.

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Helena de la Cruz  
June 2002

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: TEENAGE HEALTH PROJECT**

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### **The Research**

The Centre for Institutional Studies at the University of East London was commissioned by the Fit for Work Single Regeneration Budget Partnership to undertake an independent assessment of the Teenage Health Project in the London Borough of Newham. The aim of the research was to assess the progress the project made towards achieving its objectives to raise health awareness amongst young people.

To complete the evaluation researchers observed workshops (14), interviewed two members of staff and analysed data from 11 questionnaires completed by tutors and 265 questionnaires completed by pupils.

The workshops attended all addressed issues about relationships and sexual health.

### **The Teenage Health Project (THP)**

The project aims to raise young people's awareness of health issues and to encourage them to access primary care.

When the THP Project, run by the registered charity Community Links, started in 1996 it was funded by the National Youth Agency. In 1999 SRB funding was secured and three members of staff were employed.

According to the Project co-ordinator the SRB funding is for running workshops secondary schools in Newham on five different topics including Sexual Health and Relationships, Smoking, Alcohol Awareness, Drugs Awareness, and Puberty. Two workshops are offered for each subject except smoking. Other activities run by the SRB Co-ordinator are funded from other sources.

According to the Fit For Work Delivery Plan for year five few of the Project's outputs for year five have been achieved. These included a Mental Illness Project, Young People's Health Clinic and a summer Health Awareness show.

### **Summary of main findings**

There is demand for the workshops provided by the project.

The Teenage Health Project has been successful in attracting additional funding to expand its activities.

Initially the workshops were free. When SRB funding was secured the project charged schools £60 per year group including two workshops per class.

Difficulties in finding experienced tutors have constrained the development of the workshops and the THP staff has had to turn down offers of expanding their services in schools.

### *Feedback from the pupils*

The majority of the pupils belonged to different ethnic minority groups (52%). The largest groups represented were Black African and Black British.

The majority of the students were male: 54%.

The feedback from the pupils' questionnaire showed that the large majority (86%) had had education on the subject before. However, 222 pupils (84%) said the workshop had given them new information.

The majority of the pupils, 78%, said that they enjoyed the workshop and only 3% did not enjoy it at all.

The majority felt confident in expressing themselves in the class. However, there was a big gender difference, as 27% of the girls did not feel confident enough whereas only 8% of the boys felt the same. No such differences were identified for young people from different ethnic groups or religions.

When asked if the quiz section had answered any of the questions they had 82% of the girls found that it had whereas only 68% of the boys thought the same.

When asked what they disliked about the workshop the majority of the pupils (58%) replied people talking at the same time and interrupting the teacher.

Fifteen per cent said the workshop had touched upon issues that they felt uncomfortable in discussing: 16% were girls and only 5% boys. Four girls also commented that boys were making silly comments, which made them feel uncomfortable.

The aspects that were most appreciated by the pupils were:

- Being able to have an open and relaxed discussion about sex, relationships and the human body.
- Being able to use their own experiences and knowledge and participating in a discussion rather than being taught in a conventional way.
- Having a tutor who is not a member of the school staff to give the workshop which made their learning environment more informal, and hence more relaxed.

When asked what they would like to learn more about 51 (35%) of the pupils that answered the question said they would like information on sexually transmitted infections and how you catch them. Eleven pupils (4%) also said they would like to be informed about homosexuality.

When asked what information from the workshop, if any, they would put into practice in the future 45% of the respondents said they would use a condom properly, and 13% said they would practice safe sex.

### *Feedback from the tutors*

Nine of eleven tutors said the workshop covered new ground for the pupils.

- Seven tutor found the Project's staff style of teaching good.
- Seven of the eleven said that the workshop tutors were able to get the attention of the class.
- Six found the educational content in the workshop to be good and five found it excellent.
- Five found the quality of the materials used in the workshop excellent and four found them good.
- Ten found the information given out was suitable for all ethnic groups. Three tutors expressed concern that shyness and fear of being ridiculed by other pupils inhibited some students from participating in the discussion.
- All eleven found the workshop was able to draw the attention of the students regardless of gender.
- All found the information given was suitable for the particular age group targeted.

Ten (one did not answer) said they would contact the THP again in the future. Below are examples of the reasons for this:

*'THP provide a very good basis to start a sensitive subject. They help to break down barriers and misconceptions.'*

*'The tutors are very friendly, very relaxed, and they make the children feel at ease'.*

*'The quality of the information given is good and it is presented in an enjoyable manner'.*

### *Feedback from observations*

The observation showed that the Project has achieved its aim to raise health awareness among the young people. However there was little discussion and material presented to raise the young people's awareness of availability of services.

The observations concur with the feedback from the pupils and tutor that:

- The pupils were relaxed and felt at ease with the tutors.
- The information was presented in a way that kept the pupils attention.
- When discussions become lively it is difficult for tutors to respond to all the comments made by the pupils, some of which can be inappropriate.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations concur with the research literature on teenage sexual health education and the recommendations that the tutors and the pupils themselves made. They can be taken into consideration when developing the programme.

### *Staff*

- In order for the project to develop and meet the existing need of the schools more staff should be employed.
- The workshops should be attended by more than one tutor to enable more feedback on comments made by the pupils. This would also help to ensure that inappropriate discussions do not occur and if they do that they are picked up on and resolved.
- Having more than one tutor would also benefit the students who have special educational needs.

### *Workshop technique*

- More visual aids could be used in the workshop such as key words written on the black board or overheads together with pictures to assist the pupils that are struggling with literacy.
- More ground rules could be set to ensure children feel protected and supported by the boundaries of the discussion at the same time as they are given the opportunity to openly discuss the subjects.
- A mixed gender environment is more likely to favour boys' dominant acting out behaviour and girls have little chance to compete for information space. A suggestion would be to separate the class into smaller groups on the basis of gender.

### *Workshop content*

- The workshops could include information on different types of sexuality and also on illegal sex. This would give the pupils information that enables them to make informed decisions.
- More emphasis could be given on where pupils can turn to find out about child health and rights. The discussion could be followed up with the distribution of a list of names and organisations and their contact details. Alternatively such a list could be displayed in a place agreed with the tutor where pupils are able to use it in privacy.
- More emphasis needs to be given on where students can go or to whom they can speak if they have further questions on the matters raised in the workshop.



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## INTRODUCTION

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The Urban Regeneration Evaluation Research team at the Centre for Institutional Studies (CIS), University of East London was commissioned by the Fit for Work Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Partnership in May 2001 to undertake an independent assessment of the Teenage Health Project in the London Borough of Newham.

The Project falls within the strategic SRB Objective 1 to enhance the education and skills of local people, in particular the young and those at disadvantage, and promote equality of opportunity. It also falls under the SRB Strategic Objective 7 to enhance the quality of life and capacity to contribute to local regeneration of local people, including their health and cultural and sports opportunities.

The Project has received funding from the Fit for Work SRB Programme from 1998/99 to the last year of the programme 2001/2002 (the funding represented 26% of total revenue received in the year five of the Project). Further funding comes from the private sector (26%), and (48%) from the public sector. According to the Delivery Plan year five's total funding amounts to £189,500. With the SRB funding the project workers deliver workshops in secondary schools in the local borough of Newham. The Community Links that is running the project target five to nineteen years old.

In accordance with Health Promotion initiatives in general the aim of the project is not necessarily about providing new information to the pupils but to repeat information to enforce knowledge and use the experiences of the pupils.

This report explores the context within which the project has been set and outlines its history and development. The report goes on to discuss the findings from the questionnaires completed by the pupils and finally examines the findings derived from the interviews with the schoolteachers. Fieldwork findings from observations and interviews with project officers are elaborated throughout the report. The findings of the report are supported by the literature on health promotion, teenage health and delivery of health information to the teenage age group.

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## DEVELOPMENT AND CONTEXT OF PROJECT

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The Teenage Health Project (THP) aims to

- increase health awareness and
- increase access to preventative services by young people aged thirteen to nineteen years.

The Project arose from government initiatives to provide access to services to people at risk of social exclusion. Research has found the eleven to fourteen years olds show higher rates of suicide, alcohol and substance abuse, smoking and diet related issues.

In February 2002 the THP had one full time worker, two part time, and two sessional workers. Most of the time the THP are only able to be in one school at any one time since they often need two workers for one school. This year has seen the expansion of the staff at the THP to meet the demands from the schools, demonstrating a need for health promotion in the area.

### *Project development*

The project is building upon the practices developed in the first year of SRB funding.

Apart from the workshops the achievements of the THP includes:

- Smoking cessation programme established in year six (approximately 540 young people targeted).
- Two annual Health Conferences facilitated.
- Exhibition and workshop held at one further conference.
- Six to eight Open-days held per year in schools, colleges and further education centres.

However, according to the Delivery Plan (2001-2002) the project has met few of its targets. An intended Mental Illness project has not been initiated as well as a Young People's Primary Health Clinic, and a summer Health show. The young People's Health Conference was according to the delivery plan intended to be a standing conference contributing to the launch of Newham Young People's Health Plan. However the last conference facilitated by the project was in 1999. The intention to use peer educators has been explored but has been abandoned due to lack of commitment and reliability of the young people.

The Teenage Health Project has received funding from the SRB Fit for Work since 1998. This financial year (2001-2002) the SRB funding has been used to further develop and extend different workshops in secondary schools. Last year the project visited two schools. This year (2002) THP is visiting three schools. One of them expanded their contract to include more year groups. Some schools have been requesting the services throughout the lifetime of the project.

Since April 2001 approximately 5,000 young people have attended workshops provided by the project. The project offers workshops on a range of health related issues for years seven to ten (eleven to fourteen years olds).

### *The workshops*

The following workshops are provided for the schools

Year 7	Smoking, Relationships and personal space, Puberty, Health and Hygiene.
Year 8	Smoking, Relationships and personal space, Puberty, Health and Hygiene.
Year 9	Relationships, Sex education, and Sexual health.
Year 10	Relationships and Sex education, Health and hygiene, Drugs Awareness, Puberty, Sexual health, Relationships, Teenage Parenting Programme (virtual baby).

The topics for year ten can be adapted to the needs of the students as according to the school.

The workshops that are up and running at the beginning of 2002 are Smoking, Relationships and Sexual Health. The Virtual Baby programme is not currently running in schools. It has been run in conjunction with another agency as weekend events and aims to give 13 to 16 years olds a realistic experience of parenting.

The workshops for year nine and ten on relationships have the same objectives but different ways of achieving them. All the workshops draw upon the participation of the pupils through group work and general discussion. The year nine workshops focus on a quiz. The pupils are working in pairs to answer the questions. After ten minutes the whole class comes together to find out the right answers. The questions in the quiz deal with common misconceptions about relationships and the human body. The workshops of year ten are likewise enabling the pupils to draw upon their own knowledge and experiences. This workshop is dealing with the realities of parenthood. The pupils are asked to work in small groups to calculate daily expenditure on childcare such as food, nappies and how much support is generally given to (lone) parents.

The workshops provided for the schools are designed to cover the National Curriculum core subjects on developing knowledge, skills and understanding of opportunities in regards to healthy and safe lifestyle.

### *Government initiative*

Research has showed that teenagers have a high risk of drug abuse, conception, and suicide. Teenage health is an important aspect of the government's aim to tackle social exclusion. A report published by the Cabinet Office (1999) shows that Great Britain has the worst record of teenage pregnancy in Europe where 90,000

teenagers get pregnant per year, of which 8,000 are under the age of sixteen. Teenage parents typically drop out of school early, find it difficult to find a well-paid job and are more likely to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Tony Blair raised the risk of turning a blind eye on those that have sex before the age of sixteen

*'I [feel] children under 16 should not have sex but some do and we should be able to help them avoid the real risks that under age sex brings'.*

There are further risks with early or uninformed sexual activity. The Durex Report (2002) shows young adults take more risks when it comes to their sexual health where 28% of 16 to 20 year olds said they had sex without condom in the last 12 month.

The government has also taken initiatives to reduce the drug misuse amongst those under twenty-five years olds. The aim is to include as many people within the target group as possible and to reduce Class A drug use by 25% by 2005 and 50% by 2008 (Home Office 2000, study 224). In general the survey shows that rates of drug use are in general higher among young people (Home Office 2000). The use of drugs lowers a person's perceptions of risks and risky behaviours, increasing the possibility of having unprotected sex.

The reports show that the likelihood of involvement in the above activities are greater in deprived areas as income level, educational attainment and lifestyle are indicators of risk. Newham is ranked as the third most disadvantaged borough in the country.

### *Teenage health education in theory*

As a result of the government focus on teenage health strategy a lot of research has been invested in its development. Below are emergent findings, related to this report.

### *Health information*

Many teenagers lack information on sex education and rely on information given by friends or the media. Research has shown ignorance about sex to be a key risk factor for teenage pregnancy (Wellings et.al. 1996). It has also shown that those who mainly learn about sex from school are less likely to become sexually active under age than those that received the information mainly from family and friends (Wellings et al 1997).

Sex education and education regarding change related to puberty are high on the agenda as cross national research has disproved the idea that sex education encourages sexual experimentation or increases sexual activity (Grunseit & Kippax 1994). Research has also shown that the National Curriculum allocates insufficient time to sex education, particularly for discussions on body image and sexuality (Rolinson, 1998). It is understood that health authorities and information disseminators need to work together with teenagers to be able to provide effective advice services (Teenage Pregnancy Unit, 2000). The first step towards that aim was taken on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2002 when a group of teenagers from Sheffield

visited the Parliament to inform policy makers and politicians about the need for more sexual health services. The trip was groundbreaking in that for the first time young people had the opportunity to express their needs directly to policy makers (BBC News, 2pm 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2002).

### *Provisioning of information*

Much research has gone into understanding the best way of providing information to the teenagers regarding health-related issues. The research has shown traditional methods of distribution of information such as the GP's are not reaching the teenagers as a group. Research has shown that 'good-communication' practices identified by the GP's on the one hand and the teenagers on the other were not necessarily the same which shows a gap in communication between health practitioners (including General Practitioners, Practice Nurses and Receptionists) and teenagers (Parry-Langdon, 2000). The research showed that teenagers are worried about GP's telling their parents about their discussion. Other worries included feelings that the teenagers did not understand the medical language that the health professionals were using and the latter had no or little time to make sure the young person understood (see also Walker, 1998).

Research has been done in trying to establish the most effective way of delivering sex education and much attention has been given to peer led education. Mellanby et al (2001) has suggested that there is no straightforward answer to the question. Their research shows peer led education to be more effective in establishing conservative norms in regards to sexual relations (such as not having sex before sixteen). But on the other hand it also showed adult led sex education was more effective in delivering factual information and in engaging the students in classroom activities.

### *Focus of education*

It has been shown that the effectiveness of health education in schools is influenced by gender dynamics between the pupils. Research has suggested that school health promotion needs to address the asymmetric and gendered distribution of power between pupils, as well as to challenge the existing gender regime at an institutional level where some practices are considered to be the norm (Gillander Gadin, et.al., 2000). The findings show a need for health promotion programmes to support the need for teachers to encourage girls' strategies for increased power such as building and drawing upon support, and to find ways of working against hegemonic masculinities that are formed through sexual harassment and taking space and place in the classroom (Gordon, 1996; Paechtel, 1998) and towards more democratic behaviour amongst boys (Gillander Gadin, 2000). This would include raising questions about social attitudes and encouraging the effective means of negotiation of power (through for example democratic resolutions).

David Walker (*The Guardian*, 4/1 2002) criticises the schools and the parents in Britain for regarding sex as "dirty" and not wanting to address it openly. He argues that until we take a different approach to sex in this country teenage pregnancy will remain far above the European levels. Referring to a study yet not published he reiterates the findings, which argue

*'sex education put too much emphasis on the riskiness and dangers of sex, too little on its pleasure. This leads young people, especially boys, to adopt irresponsible attitudes'.*

Its author, Jane Lewis, professor of Social Policy at the University of Oxford, says the prevailing message about sex for pupils in British schools is that it is something illicit and therefore desirable. The study compares Britain with the Dutch system that have a much lower teenage birth rate and also have attributed more talk about sex between parents and children and more education in schools in both the physical and emotional dimensions of sex.

The Dutch system aims to give teenagers information to make informed choices regarding what they want in their lives without necessarily transmitting values of which choices are 'right' and which are 'wrong'. This contradicts the British Framework for Sex and Relationship Education put together by the Sex Education Forum that argues value messages should be *reinforced* and there should be a focus on risk reduction. At the same time the Framework claims to support education that

*'empower[s] young people, offer[s] a positive and open view of sex and sexuality, and promote[s] sexual self acceptance'.*

The contradiction between reinforcing values at the same time as offering a positive and open view of sex and sexuality reiterates the section 28's message about "normality" and preferred family structure.

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## THE RESEARCH

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The research took place between June 2001 and January 2002, with the majority of the fieldwork taking place in January 2002. The aim of the research was to assess the progress made by the Teenage Health Project towards their objectives to increase health awareness and accessing primary health care and preventative services.

At the initial discussion with the project officers the researchers were informed that the SRB funds are spent on the workshops carried out in secondary schools and the salaries of the two Project Officers. The research was designed around the project officers' activities at the time of the research and the area in which the SRB money was spent. It was agreed with the project officers that the research would include observations of workshops and collecting data from both pupils and teachers.

During the time of the fieldwork the THP had contracts with year nine and ten in two schools in Newham to provide the workshop on relationships. In total fourteen classes have been visited, nine from year nine and five from year ten. A total of 265 pupils filled in a self-completion questionnaire at the end of the second workshop. Eleven tutors participated in the research and filled in semi-structured self-completion questionnaires. All fourteen workshops were observed by researchers and analysed as secondary data.

### *Pupils questionnaire*

The self-completion questionnaire distributed to the pupils at the end of the class enabled the research to understand how its target group perceived the class. The questionnaire was designed to find out if the information presented at the workshop was relevant and appropriate for their age group. The analysis of the responses also enabled the research to identify differences between girls and boys perceptions of the workshop as well as differences between different ethnic groups.

### *Feedback from the tutors*

The feedback given from the tutors enabled the research to collect further impact data. Their comments provided useful insight into the more traditional subjects covered by the National Curriculum. Of the eleven tutors two were PHSE co-ordinators and had been actively involved in contracting the THP for the schools. The tutors were also encouraged to give suggestions on how the workshops could be improved.

### *Participant observation*

The researchers stayed and observed fourteen classes. This exercise showed common areas of discussion and preoccupations from the perspective of the pupil. It has also been useful in understanding the feedback given by the pupils and the tutors themselves. It enabled the research to understand common queries that the

pupils had during the quiz, understand possible gaps in the way in which the workshop was presented, and see the reaction of the pupils to the information given. It also enabled the researcher to understand the dynamics of the class in regards to power issues such as different ways of communicating and forming alliances.

### *Areas of difficulty*

The intention was for pupils to complete questionnaires for the workshop observed by researchers. Fourteen classes were observed in total but due to a late arrival of school staff only thirteen resulted in feedback from the students' questionnaire.

An intended postal survey to tutors of the classes that the THP had visited last year had to be abandoned due to the difficulty in getting hold of the tutors. Two tutors from outside the January workshops could finally be contacted and only one of those returned the questionnaire that had been sent to them.

The questionnaires were administered to the pupils directly after the observation of the workshop and has therefore measured immediate reactions of the young people and short term changes.



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## THE FINDINGS

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This section of the report presents the findings from the research and is divided into two parts. The first part is about the feedback from the pupils. This is followed by the findings related to the teachers' questionnaire.

### PART 1: The student feedback

#### *Sample identification*

The breakdown of the pupils were as follows:

- The majority of the 265 pupils were male (n=143, 54%). Two students did not answer the question.
- The majority of the pupils were in year nine (n=207, 78%), and aged between 13 and 14 years old (n=231, 87%).
- 129 of the 262 pupils that answered the question on ethnicity were White British. The majority of the pupils belong to ethnic minority groups as the table below shows.

**TABLE 1**  
**Ethnicity of the pupils (n=265)**

	Number	Per cent		Number	Per cent
White British	129	49%	Pakistani	7	3%
Black African	22	8%	British Asian	6	2%
Black British	18	7%	Asian Other	5	2%
Black Caribbean	13	5%	Indian	3	1%
White European	13	5%	White Other	3	1%
Black Other	10	4%	Other	3	1%
Bangladeshi	10	4%	White Irish	2	1%
Mixed race	10	4%	Not given	3	1%
Chinese	8	3%			

*Percentages do not necessarily add up to 100 as they have been rounded to nearest full per cent.*

The pupils represent a variety of religious practices.

**TABLE 2**  
**Religion (n=245)**

	Number		Number
Christian	98	Other	18
Atheists	75	Sikh	4
Muslim	29	Hindu	2
Catholic	19		

A number of pupils speak a language at home that is not English. Of the 259 students that answered the question 57 (22%) pupils represented 24 different languages. Below are some examples of languages spoken by the pupils.

**TABLE 3**  
**Examples of languages spoken at home**

Bengali	10	Punjabi	3
Cantonese	6	Gujurati	2
Urdu	5	Spanish	2
Twi	5	Eboo	1
Yoruba	4	Tamil	1
Vietnamese	3	Greek	1

The sample represents the ethnic and culturally mixed populations of Newham where the ethnic minority has been estimated to represent 56.5% of Newham's total population (GLE, 1999- round projections for 2001).

#### *Former education*

The pupils were asked if they had had any previous education on the subjects addressed in the workshop. Only a small minority of the pupils (n=29, 11%) said that this was the first education they had had on the subject. The majority (n=227,86%) had received previous education. Nine pupils did not answer the question.

When asked who gave them the education or information the answers, as demonstrated in the table below, show that most of the pupils received information on the subject in the school either from outside contractors or from regular teachers.

**TABLE 4**  
**Pervious education on relationships (n=220)**

	Number	Per cent		Number	Per cent
Contractors from outside the school taught it in the class	91	41%	Friends	24	11%
A regular teacher taught it	82	37%	Specialist clinics, consultants	5	2%
Parent, carer	52	24%	Siblings	4	2%
Leaflets, GP, Youth worker	33	15%	From the Media, TV and magazines	2	1%

*Numbers do not necessarily add up since some mentioned more than one source of information.*

Despite the fact that the large majority had had information on this subject before, 222 (n=253) stated that the workshop had given them new information. Equal percents of girls and boys (84%) answered yes to the question.

### *Workshop satisfaction*

The pupils were asked how much they enjoyed the workshop. A total of 254 pupils answered the question.

**TABLE 5**  
**How much did you enjoy the workshop? (n=254)**

	Number	Per cent
A lot	77	30%
A fair amount	120	47%
A bit	48	19%
Not at all	8	3%

Equal amount of boys and girls stated they liked the workshop *a fair amount* (48% of the girls that answered yes and 52% of the boys). The findings showed that in general the boys enjoyed the workshop more than the girls. This is illustrated in the difference between girls and boys as 61% of the boys said they enjoyed the workshop *a lot* but only 39% of the girls stated the same. The girls dominated the statement of liking the workshop *a bit* (58% of the sample that answered yes), whereas only 42% of the boys stated the same.

Fifty nine per cent of those that liked the workshop 'a lot' were from ethnic minorities, whereas forty-one identified as 'White' British. Of those who liked the workshop 'a bit' sixty-four per cent were 'White' British and thirty-six per cent belonged to ethnic minority groups. With regard to religious practices there were little variation in how much pupils enjoyed the workshop. The largest single religious group that did not enjoy the workshop *at all* were the Catholic (n=2, 11%). But the same religious group also showed among the largest per cent of liking the workshop *a lot* (n=7, 37%), together with the Sikh (n=2, 50%), and the Hindu (n=1, 50%).

The pupils were asked to expand on what they liked most about the workshop. Its interactive nature and the information given were appreciated by most. The single activity that was most popular among the pupils was the quiz as it tackles issues that are commonly talked about but never properly explained, such as ideas about anatomy and changes the body goes through during puberty.

*'For me the quiz and the a-z body parts game was the most enjoyable'.*

*'I enjoyed the quiz the most and to be able to socialise with the whole class'*

A group of pupils found the discussions helpful, as they were able to use their own experiences to contribute to the class discussion. Some students also commented that talking about sex openly was a new and pleasant experience as they had some of their questions answered.

*'I enjoyed sharing questions and ideas with the rest of the class'*

*'You were allowed to speak freely and she told us nearly everything we needed to know'*

*'That everybody can talk about sex together'*

Another group found the demonstration the most enjoyable.

*'The condom demonstration was the best part of the whole workshop'*

*'I enjoyed the way he showed us how we should use a condom'.*

The majority of the students who enjoyed the quiz the most were boys. The findings show that the girls enjoyed the general open discussions around the issues more than the quiz itself. There were few variations among the different ethnic and religious groups.

Some of the students commented upon the way in which the tutors were able to listen and interact with the pupils.

*'The thing I enjoyed the most was that I could be open and talk without being talked at'.*

*'I enjoyed having somebody to be able to talk things over with'.*

*'The part where the tutor answered our questions was the best'.*

Several pupils said they had found the workshop fun and they particularly enjoyed the informality.

*'The workshop was a laugh but at the same time educational'*

*'I learned a lot but had a lot of fun at the same time'.*

*'The teachers were very good at giving the information'*

The observations also showed that the pupils felt relaxed in the presence of the THP. Discussions often had to be brought back to talking about issues with a general voice rather than using personal pronouns as he, she, or I. This enabled the pupils to bring up queries in a third person rather than identifying it with themselves. However, as discussed below the observations suggest that boys feel more comfortable in expressing themselves in informal environments.

### *The quiz section*

The pupils were asked if they felt confident in expressing themselves in the quiz section of the workshop.

**Table 6**  
**Did you feel confident to express yourself in the workshop?**

	Number	Per cent divided by gender		Number	Per cent divided by gender
Yes	213	61% Boys 38% Girls	No	44	73% Girls 27% Boys

As demonstrated above a large majority felt confident in expressing themselves in the workshop (213, n=257) and only 44 did not feel confident enough. However the findings show that 27% of the girls did not feel confident enough whereas only 8% of the boys felt the same. The answers given by the ethnic minority is represented in the whole sample.

The findings show that on average 20% of each ethnic group did not feel confident enough to express themselves in the workshop. Of the pupils who identified themselves as Black African only one pupil did not feel confident enough. Two Chinese (25%), three Bangladeshi (30%) and two Asian Other (40%) were those that felt the least confident in expressing themselves. Those that felt least confident among the religious groups were the Hindu (n=1, 50%), the Sikh (n=2, 50%), the Muslim (n=6, 21%) and the Catholic (n=4, 21%).

When they were asked if the quiz section answered any questions they might have had 243 pupils chose to respond. The majority of 197 pupils (98 girls and 97 boys, and two of unknown gender) said yes. The finding show big difference between boys and girls as 82% of the girls found the quiz had answered some of their questions whereas only 68% of the boys found the same.

The findings show that the female pupils are less confident in talking about issues related to sex and relationships than boys. However, findings show that girls learnt more new information than the boys, even though they said they did not feel confident about asking questions.

### *Lessons learned*

The pupils were asked specific questions about their understanding prior to the workshop and if the information presented in the workshop had changed their attitudes.

One question dealt with the way in which the pupils understood what being sexually active meant. A large number of students argued that their understanding of the subject had changed. The understanding of the majority of the students before the workshop was that sexually active only meant making love, or being able to do so. After the workshop the concept of being sexually active now incorporated more aspects of sexual activity than before. Below are some comments from the pupils that illustrate the argument.

*'Being sexually active now means a number of different things like snogging'*

*'It means almost the same but with more stuff added'*

*'It means having sex but not always intercourse, just things like kissing'.*

*'It means more to me now than when I came here'*

*'To be sexually active you don't have to have sex, you can kiss and touch each other'.*

### *Knowledge to take away*

The pupils were asked to think about what information they would like to put into practice in the future. Most of the 164 pupils that answered the question said they would put into practice the information they had received on how to use the condom (n=73, 45%) and practice safe sex (n=22, 13%). Below are some illustrations from their comments.

*'I am going to be more careful. I thought that using two condoms was a good way of being safe [sic]. The workshop taught me that's not the case'.*

*'I am going to put the condom on correctly, making sure to squeeze the air out'.*

*'I'm going to be more careful and to use contraception as the workshop taught me I can get pregnant even if we have interrupted sex'.*

*'I'll use protection and make sure the condom has not ripped'*

*'Letting a boy get you pregnant at a young age ruins your life'.*

*'I'm going to wait with having sex to legal age'*

*'I'll make sure to only have sex when I am ready'*

For some of the pupils (n=16) it was harder to see how the information could benefit them. Below are some of the answers they gave when asked what information they would put into practice in the future:

*'I don't know, I am too young'.*

*'I might do in the future, I don't know'.*

### *Experiences not enjoyed*

The pupils were asked about what they did not like about the workshop. Overleaf are some of the answers they gave.

**TABLE 7**  
**What did you dislike about the workshop? (n=187)**

	Number	Per cent
People were all discussing at once	108	58%
It touched upon issues that I did not feel conformable in discussing	28	15%
I knew everything that was discussed already	16	9%
It touched upon issues that are not relevant to myself	12	6%
Some were being immature and making silly comments	4	2%
The workshop made me feel silly	2	1%

The findings show that there were big differences in what boys and what girls disliked. Sixteen per cent of the girls said they felt uncomfortable discussing the matters raised and only five per cent of the boys. The findings also show that there were few variations in the views of the different ethnic and religious groups. Of those two that said the workshop made them feel silly both were Catholic. Two of those who made comments about boys making immature comments identified themselves as Atheists.

#### *What pupils would like to learn more about*

The pupils were asked what they would like to learn more about. One hundred and seven pupils said they would like to learn more about the subjects discussed. Below are the most common responses.

**TABLE 8**  
**What would you like to learn more about? (n=107)**

	Number	Per cent
Sexually transmitted infections and how you can catch them	51	48%
Homosexuality	11	10%
Young pregnancy	4	4%

Two pupils thought the class was too short. Again, few variations were found in attitudes in regards to different ethnic and religious groups.

## **PART 2: Feedback from the class teachers**

The following section outlines the findings from the feedback given by the eleven members of the school staff.

Of the eleven teachers four were female and 7 were male. They identified their ethnic belonging as follows:

**TABLE 9**  
**Ethnicity of tutors (n=11)**

White British	7	Indian	1
White European	1	Bangladeshi	1
Black Other	1		

### *Tutor's history*

To be able to assess the insight the teachers have into the curriculum and the workshop the teachers were asked what year groups they were teaching and how long they had been in the class visited by the THP on the day. The findings show the tutors cover different age groups in the secondary school. As shown below most tutors cover more than one age group, however only two tutors cover all age groups from eleven to sixteen.

**TABLE 10**  
**Age groups covered by tutors (n=11)**

<b>Age of pupils</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Age of pupils</b>	<b>Number</b>
11	2	14	10
12	3	15	6
13	7	16	2

The length of time the tutors had been teaching the class visited by the THP varied. However, the majority (n=7) had been with the class one year or longer.

**TABLE 11**  
**Time with the class visited (n=11)**

	<b>Number</b>		<b>Number</b>
Covering	2	1-2 years	3
10 weeks	1	3 years	1
1 term	1	4 years	1
1 term to 1 year	2		

In the contract that is made between the Community Links and the school it is stated that the class tutor will be present during the whole workshop. On one occasion the class teacher arrived 25 minutes late and the THP workshop tutor had to wait outside in the corridor with the pupils. However, on another occasion one of the tutors commented that he had not been able to watch the whole workshop.

Two of the seven teachers were co-ordinators of PSHE (personal, social and health education) and as such had been actively involved in contracting the THP.



### *Outside contractors*

Two tutors commented that contractors are regularly contracted to supply specialist education. Six tutors said it happened occasionally and three tutors felt unable to comment upon the question. The table below shows the contractors that have been used in the past. It also illustrates the broad range of issues that they cover.

**TABLE 12**  
**Contractors used in the past (n=7)**

	Number
SHINE	3
Teenage Health Project (THP)	2
Police representatives	2
Drug specialists, individual speakers	2
School nurses and carers	2
Alcohol East	1
YAP (Youth Awareness Programme)(drugs)	1
NAADV (Newham Action Against Domestic Violence)	1

One of the two PSHE co-ordinators commented he had heard about the THP through a letter sent to the school regarding the previous year's contract. The other tutor commented that she knew about THP through leaflets sent to the school.

Nine of the eleven tutors identified a variety of benefits with bringing in outside contractors. The benefits can be divided into three areas:

#### *1. Quality of information*

Five of the nine tutors said that taking in outside speakers to provide specialist education is beneficial for the pupils in regards to the quality of the information given. Below are some of the comments the tutors made.

*'Outside speakers have specific jobs and up to date information and an in depth understanding of the subject'.*

*'The sessions they give are more detailed and provide the pupils with new information on a particular issue'.*

#### *2. Pupils*

Five of the nine tutors said that the pupils react differently to outside contractors and are inclined to be more attentive to non regular staff.

*'The pupils take a greater interest and get to see the discussion from another point of view'.*

*'Guest speakers always go well in schools, they links kids to the real world from the outside and children are able to connect to their own world'.*

*'Pupils react with people they do not know in a more open and relaxed way'.*

### *3. Staff development*

Two tutors also commented that bringing in specialist educators contributed to their own professional development, and can assist in understanding how the class works as a group further.

*'It enables staff to pick up new materials'*

*'The tutor is able to observe the dynamics of the class'*

### *TPH Workshop*

The tutors were asked a number of questions related to the quality of the workshop the THP had given. They were also asked to follow up on their answers and comment upon how the workshop could be improved. The majority of tutors (nine) found the workshop had covered new grounds for the pupils. Two tutors felt they were unable to answer the question.

#### *1. Style of teaching*

The tutors were asked how they found the style of teaching. The majority found the style as good (n=7), three said it was excellent, and one commented that it needs improvement. Three tutors gave suggestions on how the style of teaching could be improved.

*'The use of keywords and explanation of their meaning would help students that have literacy problems. It would also help the students whose mother tongue is not English'*

*'Firm ground rules need to be set in order to follow the child protection act and enable the students to feel protected by it'.*

*'The workshop could have more of a structure that is then combined with informality'.*

*'The workshop can be improved by planning it better'.*

There was a concern about the high level of informality that the workshop approved, and what effect it had on the workshop in general and on the pupils in particular.

## 2. Ability of getting the attention of the class

The tutors were asked how successful the workshop staff were in gaining the attention of the pupils. The majority (eight) tutors found they were successful. Two tutors commented that it needs improvement.

Six of the tutors commented upon how this could be improved. Their comments were as follows.

**TABLE 13**  
**How to get the attention of the class (n=6)**

Being more assertive	1
Setting groundrules	1
More individual task work for the pupils	1
More planning for the delivery of the session	1
Each subject could be made 'punchier'	1
The class tutor could play a more active role	1

One tutor recognised the difficulty in controlling a class and getting their attention if the tutor does not know the dynamics of the class. The tutor commented that this could have an impact on the tutors ability to keeping the class focussed.

## 3. Educational content

Six tutors found the educational content of the workshop to be good and five referred to it as excellent. Five tutors commented upon how it could be improved. A summary of their comments is as follows:

*'Extending the session a little, maybe provide three workshops instead of two as we were running out of time'.*

*'Provide more statistics on STI's, single parenting and teenage pregnancies'.*

*'Use more visual aids, keywords written down and pictures where appropriate'.*

*Maybe let the pupils do more quizzes as they enjoy group work a lot'.*

## 4. Quality of materials used

Five tutors commented that the quality of the materials used in the workshop was excellent, and four thought it was good. Two said that it needed improvement. Recommendations from the tutors included:

- More visual aid
- Pictures to show the effect of unprotected sex (STI's).
- Use of keywords.

### *Target group*

The tutors were asked about the appropriateness of the workshop in regards to the age, gender and ethnicity of the pupils. Ten tutors thought that the information was appropriate for all the ethnic groups of the class, one tutor was not so sure. This tutor also commented that it would be hard to prove or disprove the case, as pupils might not confess to feeling different as to the rest of the class due to her/his ethnic belonging. Two further tutors commented upon their answers.

*'Some students are a little bit shy to answer but they all get the knowledge'.*

*'There might be pupils that may not want to take part because of religious reasons'.*

However, as earlier discussed, the research findings show that neither the ethnicity or the religious beliefs of the pupils did affect their participation in the workshop.

Four tutors who belonged to ethnic minorities themselves support the finding as they felt the workshop reached all the pupils in the class regardless of their ethnicity.

All eleven tutors found that the workshop gained the attention of the pupils regardless of their gender. However one tutor commented that the workshop had not sufficiently addressed the consequences for the young male parents.

All eleven teachers found the information suitable for the age group of the class. One tutor raised a concern that the information given during the workshop had already been covered at an earlier stage in the pupils' education.

All eleven also thought that the workshops should be offered to a wider variety of age groups. Ten tutors found that the workshop could be mainstreamed and offered to all pupils in the same age group under the national curriculum. Four tutors expressed that mainstreaming the workshops would need co-ordination to ensure that subjects are not repeated each year.

*'It would be fruitful to offer the workshops as part of an organised programme, but not as one-off'.*

*'It could be mainstreamed if it fits with the NC scheme. Obviously material would need to be amended for younger groups'.*

*'It would depend where in the curriculum. It needs to be monitored so that information and workshops are not repeated in different years'.*

*'NC should set information levels so that all tutors have a base generic teaching knowledge for the pupils'.*

### *Further improvements*

The teachers were asked what further improvements they would welcome to the workshops. Their answers are as follows:

**TABLE 14**  
**Further improvements (n=10)**

Provide reference information	6
Use more visual aid	5
Continuous workshops rather than one off's	5
Divide pupils into smaller groups	4
Have more participatory exercises	4
Show more sensitivity to cultural differences	3
Support for special needs children	1

One PSHE co-ordinator expressed her concern about the lack of ground rules that she felt could threaten the open and sharing nature of the discussions held. She felt that the tutor needs to be careful with the use of language, as some jokes might be found offensive for some religious groups. Another tutor expressed her concern that the different nationalities in the class might not find the experience of the workshop as pleasant as the dominant group does.

During the observations of the workshops it was noted that young people spoke at the same time as the tutor and pupils interrupted each other. The tutor often struggled to follow up on inappropriate comments more often made by boys, about girls.

#### *Extension of workshop subjects*

The tutors were asked if they would like the workshops to cover additional issues. Six tutors did not answer the question, and one said that there were no more issues to cover at this present time. Five tutors provided information on subjects that they would like to see covered by the THP workshops.

**TABLE 15**  
**Other subjects that should be covered (n=5)**

Alcohol and drugs abuse	2
Teenage pregnancy	2
Illegal sex, eg. rape, incest, age of consent	2
Why we have sex, procreation versus enjoyment	1
Emotional responses to sex	1
The sex industry	1
Saying no	1

*Numbers do not necessarily add to total sum of respondents as some tutors might have Given more than one suggestion.*

#### *Future contact with THP*

Ten tutors said they would contact the THP in the future of which both PHSE tutors said yes. One tutor did not answer the question.

The tutors were asked to give reasons for their answers and below are some of their responses.

*'It's a very good basis on which to start a sensitive subject. It helps to break down barriers and misconceptions'.*

*'The workshops give the students alternative source of information'.*

*'I believe issues such as sex education are better presented by outside agencies as pupils often react in a more open way'.*

*'Students quickly build up a relationship with the speaker and they are a valuable contribution to our PHSE programme'.*

*'The class is informative, friendly, very relaxed, and the pupils really enjoy it'.*

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## SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

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This section summarises the main findings into a discussion and is followed by recommendations for the future development of the project.

### *Information*

The project has been successful in providing pupils with information that they find relevant and interesting, and for some is new knowledge. The workshop addressed issues that are relevant to young people during their adolescence, and is according to the information requested by young people.

The workshop tutor discusses issues and present information in a way that enables the pupils to make informed decisions regarding sexual practices and relationships. The findings show that the pupils felt more informed and many said they would use condom and practice 'safe sex'. For a number of pupils the workshop also changed their attitudes towards what sexually active meant, which made them more aware of their behaviour.

The pupils were interested in receiving more information about some issues not covered in the workshop such as how STI's contract and information about homosexuality. Although a booklet was handed out to the pupils with information on STI's and where to turn for further information little emphasis was given on these subjects during the class. No discussion took place on the content of the booklet during the workshop, which minimises the impact the information can have upon the pupils.

### *Provision of the information*

The project has successfully targeted an age-group which is recognised as being at risk of social exclusion, and who do not typically approach health professionals for advice and information.

The project has also been successful in creating a workshop environment in which the majority of the pupils feel comfortable about doing so expressing themselves. The friendly and informal nature of the workshop offered a more relaxed learning environment than the every day school atmosphere where the pupils felt they could talk and ask questions without being addressed as children.

However, the informal nature of the workshop together with pupils' active participation makes it hard or virtually impossible for the workshop tutor to pick up on all the questions and comments made by the pupils. In some cases this allows inappropriate comments and discussions to take place.

The information is provided in a way that maintains the interest and engagement of the pupils. This interactive nature allows the pupils to use their own experiences and knowledge. However, this environment calls upon the participation of the more

outgoing and 'secure' pupils, and those that are less secure and stigmatised are not likely to have their voices heard.

According to borough statistics the number of pupils with special education needs in Newham are increasingly placed in mainstream schools and nurseries (1999, 93.19% and in 2000 94.78%). Few of these receive specialist assistance. Bearing this in mind the THP could increase its use of visual aid, to assist students that have problems with literacy.

### *Class dynamics*

It is virtually impossible for the workshop tutor to know the dynamics of the class as well as the individual needs pupils might have. This in part makes the assistance of the class tutor essential. However observations have shown that class tutors seldom assist the workshop tutor in managing the class.

According to the research findings the project has been successful in reaching individuals from all the ethnic groups and different faith communities. However the research shows the girls to be less comfortable than the boys regarding the subject discussed and also less confident in directly participating in the workshop. The workshop encourages what has been referred to as 'male dominant behaviour' (mastering techniques through various types of abuse and claiming to be the norm) (Gillander Gadin & Hammarstrom, 2000). Girls' strategies of building alliances and resist abusive comments by telling the tutor are less likely to be heard in such environment. This makes the girls feel less confident and hinders them from participating to a full extent in the workshop.

### *Accessing preventative services*

The project aims to increase the access of young people to primary preventative services. This has been done through approximately six Open days held at schools during each year. The project has also convened one health conference in 1999, and attended one in year 2000.

The workshops provided little discussion on where the pupils could access preventive services. A booklet was handed out at the end of the workshop with information that was not necessarily covered in the workshop. The last page contained a limited number of contact details for organisations that provide the services but no discussion was held about them.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations could be taken into consideration in the further development of the project.

### *Staff*

- In order for the project to develop and meet the existing need of the schools more staff should be employed.



- The workshops should be attended by more than one tutor to enable more feedback on comments made by the pupils. This would also help to ensure that inappropriate discussions do not occur and if they do that they are picked up on and resolved.
- Having more than one tutor would also benefit the students that have special educational needs.

#### *Workshop technique*

- More visual aid could be used in the workshop such as key words and pictures to assist the pupils that are struggling with literacy.
- More ground rules could be set to ensure children feel protected and supported by the boundaries of the discussion at the same time as they are given the opportunity to openly discuss the subjects.
- A mixed gender environment is more likely to favour boys' dominant acting out behaviour and girls have little chance to compete for attention. A suggestion would be to separate the class into smaller, gender based, groups that could better accommodate the needs of the different groups.

#### *Workshop content and providing access to services*

- The workshops could include information on different types of sexuality and also on illegal sex. This would give the pupils information that enables them to make informed decisions.
- More emphasis could be given on where pupils can turn for issues on child health and rights. The discussion could be followed up with the distribution of a list of names of organisations and their contact details. Alternatively such a list could be displayed in a place agreed with the tutor where pupils are able to consult it in privacy.
- More emphasis needs to be given on where students can go if they have further questions on the matters raised in the workshop.

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